



"THE
HARVEST
INDEED
IS
GREAT,
BUT
THE
LABORERS
ARE
FEW.
"PRAY
YE
THEREFORE



THE
LORD
OF
THE
HARVEST,
THAT
HE
MAY
SEND
LABORERS
INTO
THE
HARVEST."

St. Luke x- 2

THE MESSENGER OF OUR LADY OF AFRICA

Published by
THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF OUR
LADY OF AFRICA
WHITE SISTERS
of
CARDINAL LAVIGERIE

Special Number

METUCHEN

NEW JERSEY

**RECOMMENDATION OF HIS LORDSHIP,
THE BISHOP OF TRENTON, N. J.**

I wish to recommend herewith most heartily the Apostolic work of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. Their work is truly Apostolic and is most dear to the heart of our beloved Holy Father, Pius XI, the Pope of the Missions. Any encouragement that you may give to them will be blessed most abundantly by Our Divine Master, JESUS CHRIST, who died on the Cross that all men may have Eternal Life. This Congregation of Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, we have made our very own in the Diocese of Trenton. Their work I have deemed most worthy of my special protection and I commend them most heartily to our good priests and faithful people.

Imprimatur:

+ JOHN J. McMAHON
Bishop of Trenton,
Trenton, N. J.

"The work of the Foreign Missions surpasses every other work of Christian charity as far as the soul surpasses the body, as far as Heaven surpasses earth."

— Pius XI, The Pope of the Missions.

LET ALL BE MISSIONARIES

Everyone cannot leave home and country to go to the foreign missions, but all may become Missionaries, if by prayers and alms they help those to whom God has given a special vocation to work in the Field afar.

Whoever helps the Missionary in his apostolic labor will share in his merits and will be rewarded by Him who said: "And whosoever shall give only a glass of cold water to one of those little ones, because he is my disciple, Amen, I say to you he will not lose his reward." (Sy. Matt. 10-42.)

SPIRITUAL FAVORS AND ADVANTAGES

All those who help the missions in one way or another will share in the Masses, prayers and good works offered up daily by the Missionaries and the natives for their Benefactors.

Three Masses are celebrated every month for the intentions of the Benefactors.

**SEVERAL GOOD WAYS TO HELP THE
MISSIONARY SISTERS**

The perpetual adoption of a Missionary Sister	\$2,500.00
To pay for a Missionary Aspirant's outfit and trip to Africa	500.00
The annual adoption of a Missionary Sister To support a dispensary for a year	125.00
The annual adoption of a child in one of the Sisters' orphanages	40.00
To ransom a woman or young girl for a Catholic marriage	40.00
Provide bread for a child, yearly	20.00
Provide bread for a child, monthly	10.00
To build a hut for a patient in Central Africa	1.00
To support a leper in a hut for a month	10.00
To clothe a girl so that she may go to school for a year	2.00
To keep a sanctuary lamp burning for a month	5.00
	1.00

For information apply to Rev. Mother Superior, Metuchen, N. J.



RT. REV. JOHN J. MCMAHON, D.D., *Bishop of Trenton*

MORE than a year ago we, a little band of Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, who were so benevolently received by Rt. Rev. John J. McMahon, Bishop of Trenton, into his Diocese, arrived in Metuchen, New Jersey, to establish our first convent in the United States. Since then, His Lordship has not ceased to give us every proof of the paternal interest he has so kindly taken in the African Missions.

Our foundation was greatly aided by the sympathy of many friends who, following the example of their beloved Pastor, helped us so generously, in spite of the existing hard times. It is to comply with their often repeated requests to have a publication from which they could learn more about the evangelization of the Dark Continent, and the wonderful growth of our faith among the natives; that, with the blessing of our devoted Bishop, we have decided to publish this special number of a very humble review which will be continued in the Fall. We sincerely hope it will bring before Americans the great work which, with the grace of God, has been accomplished during the past sixty years, by the Missionaries of the illustrious Cardinal Lavigerie.

This magazine will also include descriptions of the manners and customs of the different African tribes, as well as the means used by the Missionaries to gain them all, without exception, to the One True Fold. It is our most earnest desire that the Good Shepherd may deign to accept "The Messenger of Our Lady of Africa" as an instrument to win the sympathy of the Catholics of America for the millions of African pagans and Mohammedans, for whom He shed His most Precious Blood.

The Origin of the White Sisters



CARDINAL LAVIGERIE

"Your incomparable devotedness to Africa places you amongst those who have most merited from Catholicism and civilization."

— Brief of Pope Leo XIII

IN 1867 one of the most terrible famines in the history of Africa ravaged Algeria. Thousands of Arabs and Kabyles died of hunger. In their despair, parents went so far as to eat their own children. So great was the fear of such a fate, that many a starving child fled from its home and wandered through the streets of Algiers.

Cardinal Lavigerie, then Archbishop of Algiers, seeing the misery to which these poor children were reduced, gathered together the little homeless ones and not only gave them food but also sheltered them in his own Episcopal Palace and grounds. He thus united about two thousand children and fearing they would starve to death, after disposing of his own wealth in their favor, he left for France to beg alms in their behalf. In spite of the care of the good Bishop, more than half of the number died; the privations they had already endured having weakened their constitutions.

After the famine, the Venerable Prelate wished to send the children back to their homes but they refused to go, saying he was their Father and they would not leave him. The Cardinal was touched, and trusting that in time to be able to give the Bread of Life to their souls, he decided to keep the children, but to whom could he entrust them? The religious communities, then existing in Algiers, had all they could do to take care of their own works of mercy in behalf of Europeans.

It was then that the illustrious Cardinal conceived the idea of founding the Society of the White Fathers, whose members would devote their lives solely to the natives of Africa. He soon realized, however, that notwithstanding the zeal of the Missionary Fathers, their efforts could not produce satisfactory results because women alone may freely approach Arabian or Mohammedan women, who are strictly secluded under law of the Prophet. Therefore, the Venerable Prelate founded the Con-

gregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, more commonly known as the White Sisters, to aid the White Fathers in instructing and christianizing the women and through her the family; through the family, society.

The beginning, like those of all religious foundations, was very hard but courage never failed the first Sisters. They struggled on amid hardships of all kinds and when one day the Founder, seeing the Sisters lacking even the bare necessities of life without any means of helping them, wanted to abandon his project; Mother Salome, by her great zeal and spirit of sacrifice, inspired him with confidence for the future and so saved the existence of the Congregation.

The Sisters were given charge of the girls rescued from the famine. These, a little suspicious at first, studied the Sisters' attitude toward them but when they compared the goodness and kindness of these strange women with the treatment they received in their own homes, they soon perceived something divine in the Sisters' religion and it was not long before they asked to be instructed and baptized.

A few years later the children were old enough to marry, for the Arabian girls are married very young. The Catholic boys instructed by the Fathers chose their wives from among the girls entrusted to the Sisters' care. The first nine marriages took place the same day. After the ceremony the Cardinal, or their Father as the children called him, conducted the newlyweds to a village, which he had prepared in advance for them, and gave each couple a piece of land, a house, oxen and a plough in order to enable them to take care of themselves in the future.



REV. MOTHER SALOME

governed the Congregation during 43 years and was called to her eternal reward on October 18, 1930.

"She was a soul chosen by God to do great things; whose greatest ambition was to train Missionaries to penetrate this mysterious Africa to make known the Great King."

—His Grace Augustin Leynaud,
Archbishop of Algiers



Mother House of the Missionary Sisters of our Lady of Africa, Algiers

In due time other boys and girls married and the Catholic colony increased. A church was built and the White Fathers and Sisters settled in the village.

Later on other villages were established and the Sisters opened different kinds of workrooms in Algeria and in the Atlas Mountains so as to come in contact with the poor native women and girls to teach them to earn their livelihood and to win them, by their charity, into the Fold of Christ.

Wherever the missions were established a dispensary was also opened where the natives could come daily to have their wounds dressed and to be relieved of their sufferings. By their devotedness the Sisters soon won the hearts of these poor people and in caring for their bodies were also enabled to do something for their souls. Babies, brought to the dispensaries in danger of death, received a passport for Heaven.

As time went on, the Cardinal solicited help and built several hospitals for the natives which he entrusted to the White Sisters and as the newly formed Congregation increased in numbers, more missions were founded in the Sahara and in Tunisia. But the ardent zeal for souls which devoured the Great Cardinal embraced the darkest spots of the Continent and he obtained from Pope Leo XIII of glorious memory, a decree in which the territory of Central Africa was allotted to his Missionaries.

The White Fathers then pushed their way through the jungles of Equatorial Africa and established their missions around the Great Lakes. When all danger was past they called the Sisters to complete their apostleship among the negro women and children.

After the death of their Founder, the Missionaries entered the Soudan and the Sisters followed in their footprints.

The White Sisters devote themselves to every work of mercy and charity to the natives of Africa. Their principal works are: Catechism classes and the preparation of children for their First Communion, schools, workrooms, orphanages, asylums for the aged, hospitals, dispensaries, leper asylums, the care of the sick at domicile, visits of charity to the natives, and the formation of Native Sisters.

In such a variety of work each member of the Congregation may find an outlet for her zeal and she may declare, in echo to her Founder: "I have

loved everything in Africa!" Cardinal Lavigerie wished his spiritual daughters to be ever mindful of the fact that they are searchers of souls and so a supernatural spirit must vivify all their actions, whatever they may be.

To become a White Sister one must have a true vocation, be at least sixteen years of age and not more than thirty-five. A sound mind, resolute and docile character and ordinarily good health are also required.

Gifted persons will find various means of employing their talents and any amount of occupation to satisfy their pious ambitions; but they must bear in mind that abnegation of self will, being a most valuable virtue before God, must needs be the principal one for a Missionary Sister. Teachers and nurses are especially needed in the mission field today; however, all sorts of knowledge can be well employed.

The religious training for a White Sister begins by several months of probation in a Postulate. If the aspirants seem fit for the Apostolic Life and desirous of pursuing their missionary career they then become novices. After eighteen months' novitiate, they take their first vows, which they renew for at least three consecutive years before being admitted to Perpetual vows. There are no lay Sisters in the Congregation; all the members are on the same footing. Common life is a rule.

The religious habit and veil are white; however, outside the mission fields the Sisters wear a black mantle and veil when traveling.

In 1887, Cardinal Lavigerie obtained a laudatory Brief for the Institute and its Rules. The following year a five-years' approbation was given; in due time others followed and the Rules were definitely ratified in December, 1909. They have now been revised according to New Canon Law. Cardinal Laurenti is the present Protector of the Congregation.

The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa number over a thousand who are working in ninety-two missions. The number, nevertheless, is insufficient for the millions of souls who are actually pleading for instruction and baptism. "The harvest is ripe but the laborers are few." Any young lady who feels called to the mission field will find unlimited scope for her zeal among the natives of the Black Continent.

A Threefold Ceremony

AFTER HER SHALL VIRGINS BE BROUGHT TO THE KING.
THEY SHALL BE BROUGHT WITH GLADNESS AND REJOICING.
THEY SHALL BE BROUGHT INTO THE TEMPLE OF THE KING.

— Ps. XLIV. 15, 16.

THE FIRST of May had dawned for the privileged Spouses of Christ. The early sun emerged from the east, darting forth his fiery radiance, which bathed the walls of the Mother House in a flood of golden hues. Roses and lilies sparkling with morning dew exhaled their delicate fragrance from the convent garden and their perfumes ascended as frankincense to the throne of God.

The bells broke forth in harmonious chimes, pealing out their joyous note of praise and thanksgiving. Ten days of silent retreat had prepared us to feel more intensely the deep impressions which are always linked with religious ceremonies. This was to be a great day and joyfully could we sing: "Hæc dies quam fecit Dominus." It was indeed the Lord's own day, the day of His Espousals.

His Grace, Most Reverend Augustin F. Leynaud, Archbishop of Algiers, arrived at 7 a.m., accompanied by other dignitaries of the clergy. They were welcomed on the threshold of the convent by five White Fathers, our very Reverend Mother General and many other Superiors of the Congregation assembled at the Mother House for the general retreat.

The ceremony began when His Grace entered the chapel bearing his beautiful crozier in one hand (it had belonged to our Venerable Founder) and up-raising the other to bless the kneeling community, while the choir intoned the "Ecce Sacerdos Magnus." On reaching the altar, the Archbishop recited the Litany of Loretto. At the "Agnus Dei" His Grace and the Clergy rose to follow a group of professed nuns and novices who led the Prelate to the spacious Community Room, where the young aspirants knelt, arrayed in their bridal attire.

The procession halted at the entrance and the Archbishop continued to advance with the Clergy into the room. After blessing the aspirants, His Grace handed a lighted candle to each of them. Meanwhile the group of Sisters standing without, intoned the anthem "Prudentes Virgines aptate vestras lampades," "Prepare your lamps, behold the Spouse is coming, go forth to meet Him." The entry of more than forty young brides with their long white veils and orange blossom wreaths was an imposing sight.

Some relatives were waiting in the chapel: an old

lady and gentleman, who had travelled from afar, wistfully endeavored to catch sight of their beloved daughter as she passed by with downcast eyes, carrying her lighted candle which threw a soft radiance on her veiled features.

The Archbishop closed the procession. When he again reached the altar, he turned to ask the aspirants: "My daughters, what do you request?"



The Archbishop imposes

To which they answered: "The mercy of God; the Sisters' Society; and the grace to receive the habit in the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa."

The Prelate responded: "Deo Gratias," and began Mass.

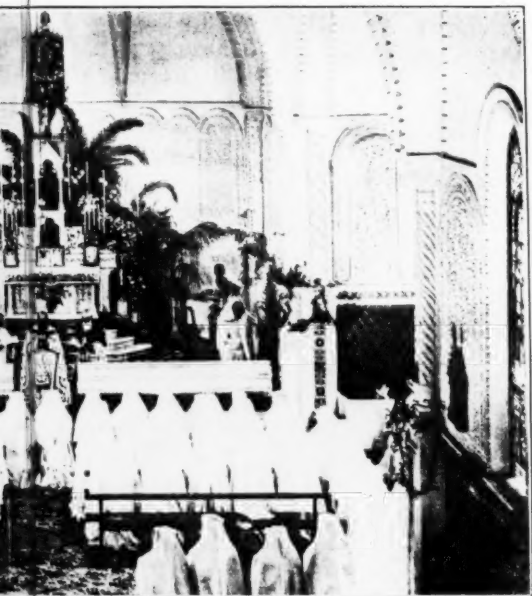
At the Offertory, a choir of novices sang the "Suscipe Domine."

After Mass, His Grace delivered a paternal apostolic discourse, then bowed in reverence to the white-haired lady and gentleman who were weeping through happiness and thanksgiving, for they had generously offered their daughter to God. Addressing the ladies and gentlemen present in the most pathetic terms, the Archbishop wished his

congratulations and blessings to be conveyed to other parents, detained through distance or other impediments from the ceremony of their daughters' consecration to God.

After the sermon, the Prelate interrogated the aspirants once more, "My daughters, do you persist in your will to take the habit in the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa?" "We persist," was the reply.

The Archbishop blessed the religious habits placed on a stand near the altar and distributed them. The choir intoned the Ps. cxiii. "In exitu Israel," and the procession glided slowly down the nave once more; each young fiancée carrying her



imposes the religious name

precious burden beneath her bridal veil. They passed from the chapel to an adjacent room, where they exchanged their worldly attire for the liveries of our Blessed Lord.

When they came back to the chapel clad in their ivory colored habit, wearing short white veils, they indeed looked very much like a flock of young lambs prepared for the holocaust. As they entered, they advanced to the altar rail and knelt once more whilst the Archbishop imposed the long white veil which completes our religious costume. A crown of roses was finally deposed on their brow.

Before returning to their respective places, the Archbishop once more addressed each one in the following terms: "My daughter, thou shalt forget

thy name and thy father's house, and hence forth be called: Sister Mary . . ." This formula might seem severe to broken-hearted parents, but it must be remembered that the words are taken from Holy Scripture: "Hearken, O Daughter, and see, and incline thy ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty." Ps. xlv. 11, 12.

As His Grace explained in his sermon, this should not be interpreted in a rash manner. No daughter who consecrates herself to God will ever forget her dear parents and relatives. She does not stifle or blunt her affections, but she raises them to a higher standard and enhances them with a divine impulse. Parents may weep, but their tears should be the expression of love and gratitude, for their daughters, as chosen lilies, have been transplanted into the land of promise, into the land of true peace and happiness, there to flourish in the presence of the Lord; their splendor will surpass all human beauty and glory.

The ceremony continued. The Novices who were to take their first engagements advanced one by one; knelt and posed their right hand on the Holy Gospels before the Archbishop and pronounced the formula of their annual profession. Other Sisters, having completed their temporary engagements, followed in the same order to make their perpetual vows. When the last Sister had signed her name at the foot of the altar, our Reverend Chaplain collected the contracts bearing each one's signature and placed them before the Tabernacle.

The Sisters by this time had taken their ranks in the nave. His Grace intoned the "Te Deum," and the elect of the day fell prostrate on the carpet as in the ceremony of ordination. No doubt that during those short precious moments a most fervent prayer went up to God from those throbbing hearts for all the dear ones far away.

After the "Te Deum," the Clergy retired to the sacristy and the choir sang the Ps. cxxxii., "Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum," while the newly admitted Sisters passed by to give and receive the kiss of peace from the elder members of the community. This ended the threefold ceremony of the religious investiture, the first engagements and the perpetual vows.

May we have the pleasure of seeing many more young girls follow the noble example of the White Sisters who are joyfully laboring in the mission field for God's love and glory and the salvation of so many poor heathens who linger in the shadows of death awaiting their Holy Redeemer.

— By a White Sister.

A Day at a North African Mission

IN A little house, hidden under palm trees, a bell has softly rung: it is half-past four. The Missionary Sister recognizes it as the Master's call to begin work in His vineyard and she joyfully responds to it, offering to her Divine Model every minute of the coming day.

She dons her white livery and hastens to the chapel, where the Divine Guest resides night and day. Prayer, meditation, Mass, Communion: blessed sources, whence the faithful servant of the Lord draws the strength to accomplish her daily duties and the necessary graces to spread around her the fire of holy charity. Then follows the hours for putting into practice the Master's lessons and to do His work.

There are many tasks to fulfill in this humble dwelling! I will not tell you the cares of the one, who at the head of the Community, directs it with solicitude, nor those of the procuratrix who often finds her purse too light to settle her accounts; I will not stop either to consider the more modest labor of the Sister charged with the laundry or the kitchen. In whatever way it may be, each one does her duty and so contributes to the one aim: the conversion of Africa. Follow me rather today in the different apostolic works confided to our care.

At eight o'clock the bell announces the opening of school, workrooms and dispensary. The crowd is already great at the gate; little tots who come to the nursery while their mothers work; school girls with their books, while those of the workrooms have their lace or a flake of wool to spin; finally, the basket-makers who carry their artistical piece of work on their heads.

The teacher presides at the entrance of her pupils; Arabs and colonists elbow one another to their places. The Sister inquires about sick parents, encourages the timid, restores the tricksters to order, and when all have entered, prayer begins, because all learn to ask God for their daily bread. Almost

all also, without distinction of religion, like to salute Our Lady of Africa.

This first duty fulfilled, one soon hears the "ba," "be," "bi," of the beginners while the more advanced scholars penetrate the mysteries of grammar and arithmetic.

A signal will be given from time to time to interrupt that hard labor and allow the children a little leisure to amuse themselves.

While these were entering in good order, the sick were jostling one another at the dispensary door, and as the Sister appears there is a great clamor, for each one wishes to be the first served. There are some patients who have walked several hours to come to be taken care of by the "doctor." They wish at all costs to have their wounds dressed promptly in order to reach their "gourbis" (native homes) before the great heat of the day.

The Sister's voice can hardly be heard over those of her clients. "Well, let's see, who came first?"

Peace is immediately restored. All human miseries are assembled here: fever, frightful wounds, often eaten by worms; deep cuts, the result of quarrels; diseases of the scalp, breast, eyes, nose, ears, and what not.

Then a long history of those whom we must console, encourage, and even reprimand once in a while, begins. Listen rather:

"Sister, my back aches, my legs hurt, my arms pain. I cannot see any more. Give me some medicine."

"But, Grandma, your ills are the effects of age! Are you not eighty years old?"

"Sister, my husband argues with me every day, and he strikes me. Give me some medicine so that he won't get angry any more."

To make the beseecher understand that submission and patience are often the best means to employ in the present case, is a very difficult thing.

"Sister, my child is going to die. I don't know what is the matter with him, look."

The woman presents a little being suffering from rickets who has but a breath of life and waits his passport to join the angels.

"Sister, my mother is very sick, she cannot come so far as this, she wants you to come to see her."



Name, address, all is written down and a visit promised for the afternoon.

There are others, who confident as little children, bring us their goats and their cows so that we may also cure them. Must not one, as the Apostle, make himself all to all to gain them all to Jesus Christ? God blesses our good will; even performing little miracles at times, in favor of our clients.

Now it is time for dismissal of class. The little dispensary court, an instant ago almost deserted, is immediately invaded by the noisy troop of children, who wishing to swallow a spoonful of syrup, rush towards the Sister, coughing desperately.

the parents, if the latter profit well from the lessons received and are always glad to meet and encourage the old scholars who, because of Mohammedan laws, are strictly secluded.

The Sisters do their best to satisfy all those who demand their care, comforting those who suffer and very often instructing in the Eternal Truths the dying to whom Providence has directed their steps. Who can conceive the happiness which overwhelms a Missionary Sister when she may pour on the head of a moribund, regenerating water?

The Sisters keep in mind the principal object of their visits and leave a good word to all, which pro-



The Messenger of God on her errand of Charity

But the hour of prayer has just sounded. All know it and respect the time consecrated to God by the Missionaries. So the doors close without difficulty and it is at the feet of Our Saviour that the morning ends.

Time passes quickly in Community: dinner, recreation, where all share their joys as well as their troubles; recitation of the second part of the Rosary and it is already time to recommence work.

While the classes and workrooms are resumed as in the morning, the dispensary Sister, with her companion, prepares for the afternoon. Armed with remedies, the two messengers of God start off on their errand of charity to the sick.

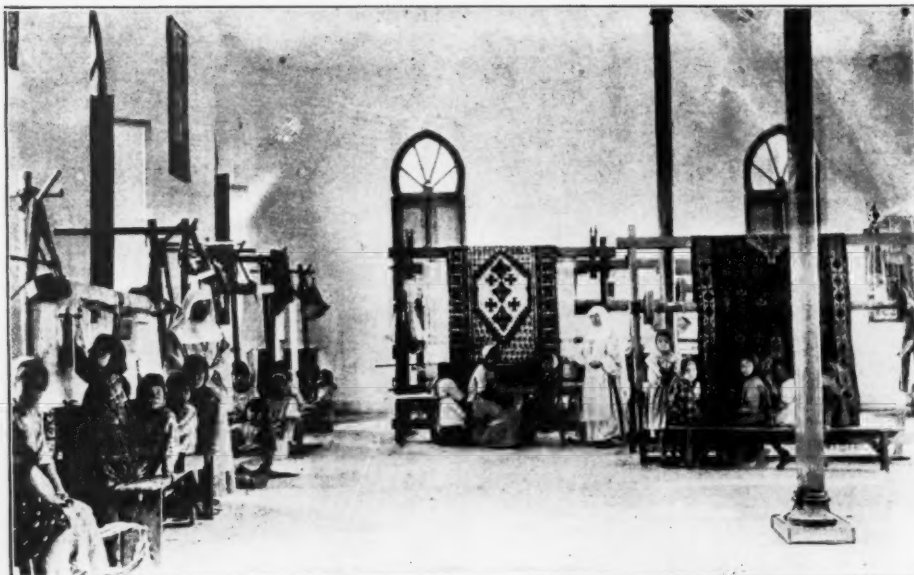
They also call at the pupils' homes to inquire of

duces unexpected effects. Thus, one day in leaving a house, the apostle of charity said: "Continue to do good and avoid evil, because God rewards those whose hearts are free from all sin."

"You are right, Sister, God rewards the good. You are good; He will put you in Heaven, but I have sinned and I know that He punishes evil, there remains for me but damnation —"

"Why no, you are mistaken. God is all merciful and clement. He pardons all those who repent of their sins. Ask Him pardon and He will forgive you your sins."

"Oh! Is it really true? God pardons a sinner?" And in the excess of her surprise and joy, she called her neighbor; "Zohra, come listen to what Sister



One of the Sisters' Workrooms where beautiful Oriental Carpets are made

says: God pardons those who are sorry for their sins."

These two women are so happy over this good news that they go to find a third one and then a fourth, delighted to teach, in their turn, the great mercy of God.

Could one remain insensible to similar scenes? Would not a Missionary Sister's day be well spent, even if she but cast a ray of hope in the heart of a poor Mohammedan? But the time flies and one must think of returning.

Someone calls again: "Come quickly, my little boy has just fallen into the fire!"

In a little hut, stretched on a mat, the baby scarcely gives a sign of life.

After an application of remedy, the Sisters retire. The mother is ignorant of the mystery of love which has just been operated before her! Henceforth, she guards an angel who will soon plead for the Light of Faith for her before the throne of God.

Six o'clock has just struck when the happy "excursionists" reach home. Just a few minutes to put the house in order and the bell rings for the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament; the time to offer to the Master the flowers gathered for Him and to thank Him for the graces of the day which is ending in recollection and preparation for the combats of the following day.

How pleasant is the evening reunion, when each, forgetting her fatigues, dilates in a cheerful recreation. Let us listen to one of the Sisters speaking of the work with which she is charged, for we have not entered the workrooms.

"Old Kheira came to help in the dyeing this morning and while the skeins of multicolored wool swayed in the wind, she listened to me giving the

little workers their daily lesson in morals. The good old woman admired all she heard:

"Sister, what you say is wonderful. Why did you not come any sooner to teach us all these things? We, poor women, would not be so ignorant as we are!"

Tourists frequently visit the workrooms. Some ladies having admired the beautiful carpets and tapestry which the children had just finished, asked one of the little ones if the Sisters did not teach them anything else but weaving.

"Oh! Yes, Madam," replied the child, "the Sisters also teach us the words of God."

And she began to recite the Commandments almost word by word.

In leaving, the visitor asked the gardener, Mohammed, if he were glad to have his daughter attend the workroom.

"Why shouldn't I be?" replied Mohammed. "Since my daughter comes to the Sisters we do not know her any more; she has become docile, obliging and learns things that we, Arabs, were ignorant of until now. Her mother urged her one day to tell a lie (inveterate habit among the natives), 'No,' replied the little one, 'it is not right, Sister said that we must never lie!'"

Is it not admirable to see with what docility these hearts accept the teaching which is given to them?

* * * * *

The last sound of the bell puts an end to the conversation. The good Master once again receives the Missionary Sisters and the echo of their prayer dies away softly at His feet.

Repose will be sweet after this new day entirely spent in working for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

— By a White Sister.

The Missions of Central Africa

PROGRESS OF THE MISSIONS

It is only fifty years since the first Missionaries arrived in Central Africa. They sowed, watered with their sweat, and God gave the fecundity. The negroes, who were instructed by the Missionaries, were martyred for their faith. Some of them were still catechumens and so were baptized in their own blood.

The blood of martyrs is never shed in vain. The soil imbued by it brought forth a hundred fold, for today, there, where fifty years ago not a single negro knew of God, over six hundred thousand Catholics love and adore Him, seventy-nine native black priests sing His Divine Praises and almost three hundred native black Sisters are espoused to Him.

EDUCATIONAL WORK FLOURISHES IN CENTRAL AFRICA

To educate and Christianize the native women and girls is one of the main features in the White Sisters' career. Civilization has reached the point in Equatorial Africa, that the Sisters have High Schools, and many negro girls have received their diplomas. There is also a Normal School in Uganda where the Native Sisters get their certificates to teach.

In preparing their students for their diplomas the Sisters' first aim is to educate the girls in order to raise them from the depraved mentality of the natives so as to take their place in the family and

Millions of negroes are actually begging for instruction and baptism. Alas! "The laborers are few." Thousands of young girls are eager to become Catholics. Unfortunately, in conformity with the native customs, they are already sold in marriage to pagans. They plead with the Sisters to release them so that they may be instructed and baptized. This is not always possible, for to ransom a girl, a cow, goats, sheep, chickens, or pieces of calico must be given to her father. No matter what it may be, it always amounts to twenty dollars or more, a big sum for poor Missionaries; but the Sisters try to release as many girls as possible, for each Christian marriage means generations of souls for God.

society and thus become suitable companions for their future husbands who, likewise, are receiving a thorough Christian education from the White Fathers. The Sisters do not forget that the girls of today will be the mothers of tomorrow, and they try to instil in them firm faith and solid piety. The results are very encouraging, the Christian girls make excellent wives and mothers and give every proof of their faith in the different trials of life. Even the marriages of the young neophytes are very consoling, when they finally tie the knot.

A MARRIAGE CEREMONY

As the pagans have many and various superstitious customs for a wedding, it is a very heroic act for the neophytes to abandon them all. For instance, in most of the pagan tribes it is the custom once a girl is engaged, that is, as soon as she is sold in marriage, not to speak to or look at her future husband. According to other tribes she must not even pronounce his name. Moreover, she is supposed to show every sign of deep grief, to be opposed to the marriage so as to be taken by force to her husband's home.

For this reason it is very hard to get a young neophyte to say "yes" at a Christian ceremony, in spite of the fact that she is to marry a man of her own choice. One day a couple approached the altar rail before Mass to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony. When the Missionary Father asked the young neophyte if she would take the man to be her husband, he received no answer. It usually



Sisters and Neophytes

takes a great deal of patience and persuasion on the part of the Missionary and some threats on that of the groom to make a young neophyte give her consent. However, on this particular day, after repeating the question but once, the priest, to the great astonishment of the bride and the whole congregation, went back to the foot of the altar and began Mass. The sacristan ordered the couple back to their places.

The would-be bride soon regretted her silence, for hardly had the priest begun the Confiteor when she called out, "I want him, Father." At the Epistle and the Lavabo a shrill voice was again heard; "Father, I want him, I want him, Father." At the Communion, she began to cry, "I want him, Father," and when Mass was over she returned to the altar rail and begged, "Father, I said, 'I want him.'" But in order to give her and all the young girls present a lesson, the Missionary postponed the marriage until the next morning.

The White Sisters and the Lepers

THE White Sisters care for all the destitute and abandoned, but among them are not the lepers the most to be pitied? Yet how numerous they are in Central Africa!

The Sisters have charge of four large leper asylums: Makete and Ushirombo (Tanganyika Territory), Mua (Nyasaland), and Kagondo (south of Lake Victoria). In other missions lepers are cared for in smaller numbers.

Makete is a settlement of which the White Sisters took charge in 1928. It covers about eight square miles and has numerous separate huts for the accommodations of about 750 lepers, some of whom can still work to cultivate bananas which serve as the principal food for the whole settlement. Those who can walk receive treatment daily at the dispensary; the others lie in their huts and are visited there by the Sisters. One and all show the liveliest gratitude for whatever is done to relieve their sufferings.

All these poor lepers of Makete were pagans when the White Sisters went to them; now after two years many are being instructed in the Catholic faith and several have been baptized before going to their eternal rest. One of our Sisters, writing from Makete, describes her discovery in the jungle of a leper woman who was destined thus to be placed at the last hour in the way of Heaven.

"The other day we were riding our donkeys through the jungle when we heard a loud shout and saw that it came from a shepherd boy in charge of a few lean cows. 'Come this way, Mamma,' he shouted, 'a woman over there is ill and wants medicine.'

"Our donkeys' long ears were soon turned in the direction to which he was pointing. We found a small hut with so small an entrance that we were obliged to crawl in on our hands and knees. Once our eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness we saw the poor woman. Evidently she had been left without care of any kind; although I have been a nurse for a good many years I have never seen such a living skeleton. Horrible sores covered her body and must have been most painful.

"Happily she was conscious and her first words were, 'I am hungry!' After taking some nourishment she listened gladly while we told her about God and Heaven. She willingly accepted all that is necessary for baptism, and on account of her serious condition we baptized her without delay. But how could we leave her to die alone in such misery? We soon found two sturdy fellows who were willing to give us some assistance. They rolled her up in her sleeping-mat, tied it firmly and passed a stick through the knots. Then with this improvised hammock we all set out for the convent. A river had to be crossed and we longed for the intervention of Moses on our behalf; however, we managed without him and reached home in safety.

"Soon our neophyte was installed in a room adjoining the dispensary. With a cheerful fire, milk within reach, her sores dressed and a blanket to cover her emaciated frame, the poor woman was in the seventh heaven. But in the early morning of the following day her soul passed away from this world. How she must have marvelled at all that she found stored for her in the Better land!"



To these suffering and abandoned lepers the white garbed Sister brings consolation.

"I come to thee, O my dear Africa. I had sacrificed all to thee when, urged on by an evident impulse from God, I relinquished all to devote myself to thy service. But what can one man's life avail in such an enterprise? Hardly have I sketched the work, I have only been a voice in the desert hailing to those who are to trace the way to the Gospel. I am dying having only been able to suffer for thee and by my sufferings, have prepared thee apostles."

— Extract from Cardinal Lavigerie's spiritual testament.

